MARCH 2026

ROCK TALK

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Aquamarine

The name “aquamarine” is derived from the Latin words aqua meaning “water” and marinus meaning “of the sea.” This etymology reflects the gemstone’s characteristic colors, which range from light blue to deep oceanic hues. Historically, aquamarine has been associated with sailors and the sea, often believed to bring good fortune and protection during voyages. The gemstone belongs to the beryl family, sharing its lineage with other precious stones like emeralds.

Aquamarine has been mined in various parts of the world, including Brazil, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Madagascar. Brazilian aquamarines, in particular, are renowned for their exceptional clarity and vibrant colors. The gemstone’s popularity has grown over centuries, making it a favorite for jewelry pieces such as rings, necklaces, and earrings.

Aquamarine is more than just a beautiful gem; it carries deep symbolic meanings. Historically, it has been regarded as a stone of courage, calming the mind and reducing stress. In ancient times, it was believed to protect sailors from the dangers of the sea, and some cultures considered it a treasure of mermaids.

In modern times, aquamarine is often associated with peace, tranquility, and clarity. Its soothing blue tones are thought to evoke feelings of serenity, making it a popular choice for those seeking emotional balance. The gemstone is also connected to communication and expression, believed to enhance one’s ability to articulate thoughts clearly and with confidence.

As the birthstone for March, aquamarine is said to bring good health, youthfulness, and renewed energy to those who wear it. It is also used in meditation practices to enhance spiritual awareness and inner peace.

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Aquamarine
- Secretary's Report
- March 2026 Announcements
- Golden Rutilated Quartz
- Silicon Dioxide - March Presentation
- Polda Dot Agate
- Gemstones vs Minerals vs Crystals
- Lander Blue Turquoise
- Bench tips

February’s Birthstone - Amethyst

Aquamarine is often referred to as the “gem of the sea” due to its striking resemblance to the ocean’s colors and its historical ties to sailors and the maritime world. The gemstone’s shimmering blue hues mirror the various shades of seawater, from the light blues of shallow tropical waters to the deep blues of the open ocean.

In folklore, aquamarine was believed to calm the waves and keep sailors safe during their journeys. Some legends claimed that it was a gift from the sea god Neptune, while others said it originated from the treasure chests of mermaids. This connection to the sea has made aquamarine a symbol of protection for travelers, particularly those embarking on journeys across water.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 2-11-2026

The meeting was called to order by President Michael Steverson at 7:05pm. We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
There were no new members to recognize.
There were no guests in attendance.
Leslie Newberry made a motion to accept the minutes of our January meeting as printed in the newsletter, Roberta Oldread seconded. Passed by all members.
Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. Ralph Barber made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Roberta Oldread. Approved by all.

President Steverson began with announcements:
Gem Show co-chair and Board Member, Janice Wojcik, is quite ill at this time and will not be attending monthly meetings for a while. She expects to make a full recovery. Club members were asked to send her prayers and good thoughts.
It's time to submit applications for the club's yearly scholarship to the William Holland School of Lapidary Arts in Young Harris, Georgia. Applicants must have been an active member of the club for at least 2 years and the more active, the better. Volunteering during the Gem Show, during meetings and generally helping out with club functions are all taken into consideration when the Board of Directors chooses a scholarship winner. Applications will be available at the March meeting.
Our March meeting program will be presented by Vice President Chris Ward regarding "Silicon Dioxide – Quartz and its many forms and colors".
Pam Gonzales made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Chris Ward seconded, passed by all.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

March 2026 Announcements

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!!! If you wish to apply for the club's "William Holland School for the Lapidary Arts" Scholarship Award for 2026, please pick up an application from the front table at the next meeting. Fill it out and give it to Secretary Steverson by/at the March meeting. The main requirements for consideration are that you have been a club member for 2 years, that you have been an active member during that time, and that you agree to give a presentation on what you learned or agree to teach a class or classes on what you learned at WHS. Applications will be considered by the Board and results will be announced in April.

A REMINDER

IF YOU ARE SICK OR HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SICK AND MAY STILL BE CONTAGIOUS, PLEASE DO NOT ATTEND OUR MEETING. THERE WERE SICK PEOPLE AT OUR JANUARY MEETING/PARTY, WHICH CAUSED OTHER MEMBERS TO BECOME ILL. THIS CAUSED SUFFERING, MEDICAL BILLS AND LOSS OF INCOME. BE CONSIDERATE OF YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS.

Membership dues are due

So far, only a small amount of our 2025 members have paid their 2026 dues. To those who have renewed, thank you!

Please pay your dues promptly so you can continue to attend the meetings you enjoy.

If you do not pay by/at the March meeting, you will no longer be on our member list. You don't want to miss any of the fun, and we don't want to miss you! Pay right away!

To all members:

Your president and your Board of Directors are working diligently to plan and facilitate classes and training sessions for you to learn the skills you have shown an interest in.

We are looking toward the future of our club and are excited by what we see.

At the next two meetings, we will ask each member to fill out a very short questionnaire regarding what you would like to learn as a club member. This will help your Officers and Board know what you would enjoy.

Golden Rutilated Quartz

Golden Rutilated Quartz is one of the most visually striking gemstones, renowned for its captivating golden needle-like inclusions of rutile, set within a matrix of clear or smoky quartz. This gem not only holds significant aesthetic value but also represents a fascinating intersection of geological processes. To appreciate its beauty fully, we must delve deep into its formation, physical properties, occurrences, and geological significance. This detailed article will explore Golden Rutilated Quartz from a geological perspective, shedding light on the intricate natural phenomena that give rise to this extraordinary mineral combination.

Golden Rutilated Quartz is a composite material, consisting of quartz (SiO_2), one of the most abundant minerals on Earth, and rutile (TiO_2), a mineral often found in high-temperature and high-pressure environments. The creation of this gemstone requires a precise sequence of events under specific geological conditions.

Golden Rutilated Quartz is a masterpiece of geological craftsmanship, combining the transparency of quartz with the metallic brilliance of rutile inclusions. Its formation is a story of patience and precision, shaped by Earth's dynamic forces over millennia.

Whether studied for its scientific intrigue, admired for its aesthetic beauty, or cherished for its metaphysical symbolism, this gemstone stands as a testament to the complexity and wonder of our planet.

Read the article at GeologyScience.com

Silicon Dioxide, SiO_2

A Beginners Introduction to Quartz In Its Many Forms & Colors

Our March program will be a presentation by Withlacoochee Vice resident Chris Ward.
Chris's presentation will be on quartz, in all its many forms and colors.
Bet you didn't realize just how much quartz is in everything around you.

Will you like it? Of quartz you will!

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Polka Dot Agate

Most people looking at Polka Dot Agate, when they see individual circles, round spots and repeating patterns on it, think this cannot be natural.
Patterns are too regular, colors are too clear, image is too "conscious" like. As if someone sat down, put dots with brush on stone.
But strange part of matter is this: None of patterns on this stone were made by human hand. There's no paint, no cutting, no addition. Everything you see is result of natural processes lasting millions of years.
And what makes Polka Dot Agate interesting is exactly this: Nature sometimes produces works that resemble human design too much.

Polka Dot Agate takes its name from distinct round patterns on it. "Polka dot" expression evokes dot patterns we see in fabrics or designs. This comparison is not coincidence, because stone really has similar appearance.

This stone is member of agate family. So basically it's silica origin and has microcrystalline quartz structure. However what separates it from ordinary agate is round, concentric or semi-concentric patterns developing in its internal structure.

These patterns sometimes are separated with clear boundaries, sometimes mix into each other with soft transitions. None are exactly same but at first glance gives feeling of "repeating". Human eye immediately notices this order and starts looking for natural explanation.

This is most wondered part of Polka Dot Agate. Because patterns are not random but not as regular as mathematical either.

During formation of this stone, liquids rich in silica seep into cavities and cracks inside rock. However this seeping doesn't happen same way at every point. Some small areas have different chemical or physical conditions compared to their surroundings. These micro differences create round structures over time.

These structures sometimes grow around small nuclei. Silica accumulates layer by layer around these nuclei. Each layer reflects conditions of different period. Temperature, pressure, content of solution... All affect tone and boundaries of these patterns.

What emerges in end looks like dots placed consciously. But actually these dots are traces of nature's patient repetitions.

Read the entire article at
GeologyScience.com

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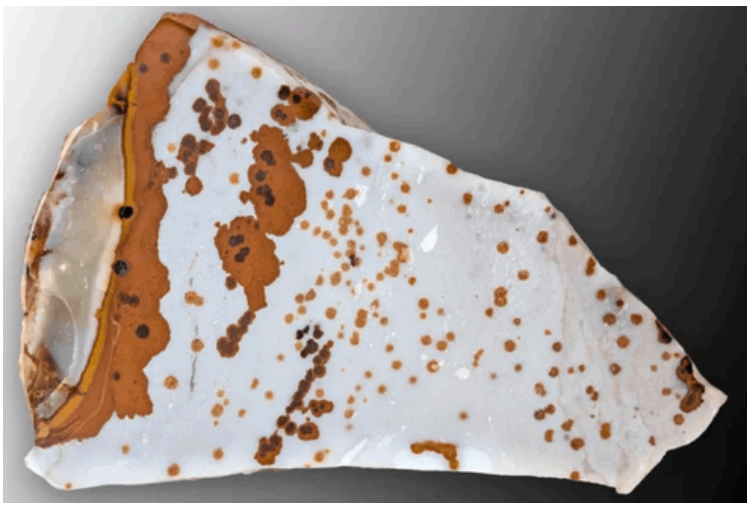


Gemstones vs Minerals vs Crystals – The Real Differences

People who are new to geology, gemology, or even crystal collecting often run into the same confusion: What exactly is the difference between a gemstone, a mineral, and a crystal? These three words appear everywhere—social media, online shops, geology blogs—but most of the time they're used incorrectly or interchangeably. One person calls an ordinary quartz pebble a "crystal," another calls a piece of obsidian a "mineral," and someone else refers to every shiny rock as a "gemstone."

In reality, these three terms describe completely different things.

- A mineral is a natural chemical compound.
- A crystal is a structural form.
- A gemstone is a material valued for beauty, rarity, and durability.

They overlap, but they are not the same.

- A mineral can be a crystal.
- A mineral can become a gemstone.
- A gemstone can be a mineral—or not.
- A crystal can be a mineral—or not.

A mineral is a naturally occurring, inorganic, solid substance with: a defined chemical composition, an ordered internal atomic structure (a crystal lattice), consistent physical properties and a geologic origin.

Minerals are the building blocks of rocks.

Granite, for example, is a rock composed of minerals such as quartz, feldspar, and biotite.

A crystal is not a material category, but a structural condition.

A crystal is any solid whose atoms are arranged in a highly ordered, repeating geometric pattern. This pattern is the crystal lattice. It gives rise to external shapes, angles, and physical properties.

A crystal is defined by its internal order, not its exterior perfection.

This means:

- A mineral that grows with perfect faces is a crystal.
- A mineral that grows distorted, massive, or granular is STILL a crystal internally.
- A substance can form crystals but not be a mineral.

A gemstone is any material—mineral, mineraloid, or organic—that is valued for:

- Aesthetics
- Durability
- Rarity

Most gemstones are minerals, but some very famous ones are not.

- Opal → a mineraloid; no consistent crystal structure
- Obsidian → volcanic glass; not a mineral
- Amber → fossilized tree resin; organic
- Pearl → organic carbonate structure produced by mollusks
- Coral → organic ~~$CaCO_3$ framework~~

Read the article at *GeologyScience.com*

Lander Blue Turquoise

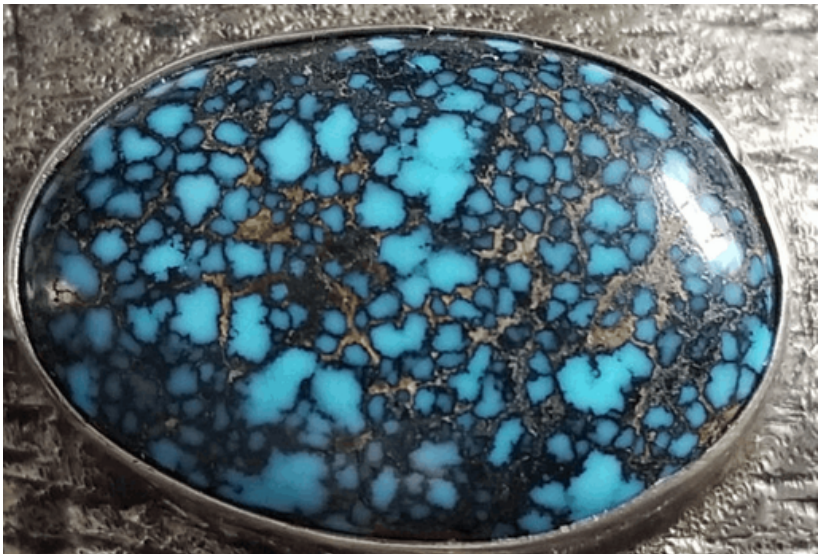
Turquoise has been one of the most revered gemstones for thousands of years, prized for its unique and captivating colors that range from sky blue to green. Among the many different varieties of turquoise, Lander Blue is considered one of the rarest and most valuable due to its exceptional color, purity, and geological origins. This article delves deep into the geological formation, mineral composition, gemological properties, and historical significance of Lander Blue turquoise, exploring what makes it such a unique and cherished gemstone.

Lander Blue turquoise was discovered in 1973 in Lander County, Nevada, USA. It was located in an area that had already been known for producing high-quality copper deposits, specifically near the Carico Lake mine, which is famous for its other turquoise varieties. The turquoise was found by accident when a mining company was prospecting for copper in the region. Initially, the mine was thought to hold promise for copper extraction, but the discovery of turquoise changed the course of the mining operations.

Lander Blue turquoise is considered one of the rarest forms of turquoise in the world. The original Lander Blue mine was mined for a brief period during the 1970s, and by the end of that decade, the deposit had been exhausted. Since then, no new turquoise of the same quality has been found in the Lander County region, making Lander Blue extremely scarce.

Due to its rarity, Lander Blue turquoise is highly valued by gemologists, collectors, and jewelers. The value of Lander Blue can vary depending on factors such as color, size, and the presence or absence of matrix. Pieces with a deep, uniform blue color and minimal matrix are considered the most valuable. Large, high-quality specimens can fetch thousands of dollars per carat, making Lander Blue one of the most expensive types of turquoise on the market.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*



Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Clubdoes notsponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS(The Southeast Federationof Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."

The SFMS insurance covers the property owner where members might go, but not the club members.

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.

It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2026 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com .com
Vice President	Chris Ward	818.439.0217	chris_ward678@yahoo.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Michael Steverson (President) Chris Ward (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler Janice Wojcik (Vendor Co-chair) Ralph Barber (Past President)

Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

BEZEL CLOSER

A bezel closer is a steel punch that makes quick work out of pushing the metal down over a round stone and burnishing it. It works with regular bezels, with tube settings, and with prong settings. Stones can be set in as little as 30 seconds.

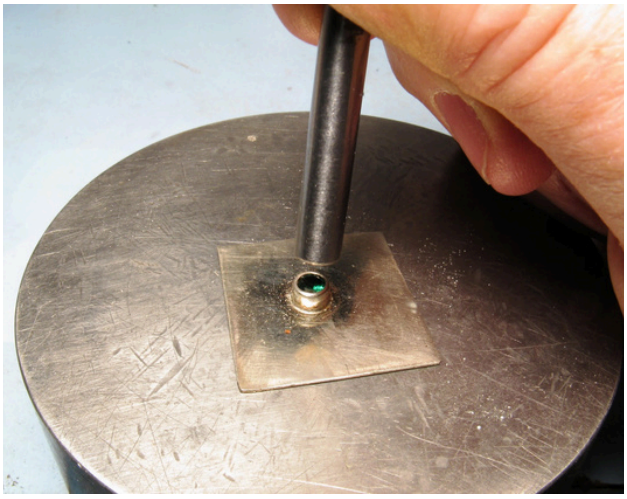
The working end is a concave cavity that fits over the bezel or prong setting and is pushed and twisted to capture the stone. Sets can be purchased but are expensive and contain many sizes you will probably never use. If all you need is one or two sizes, here's how you can make them yourself.

Find a round steel rod or bolt a little larger in diameter than your bezel cup or prong setting. Cut a 5 inch length. File both ends flat. Locate the center of one end, centerpunch a divot, and drill a small pilot hole about 5 mm deep. Remember to use a little oil as lubricant when cutting steel.

Select a ball bur a bit larger than the bezel. Enlarge the pilot hole to a full hemispherical cavity. Test for proper fit with your bezel. Bezel should first contact the cavity about a third of the way in. When the size is correct, polish the cavity using Zam on a length of chopstick in your flexshaft. If the tool is not polished, it will leave scratches on your bezel or prongs.

When using the tool, the first step is to capture the stone correctly. I usually work by hand and push the punch straight down over the bezel or prongs. This causes the metal to start bending over the stone. The next step is to inspect the stone with a lens to be sure it is staying level. Repeat until the stone is seated on its bearing and can't move anymore.

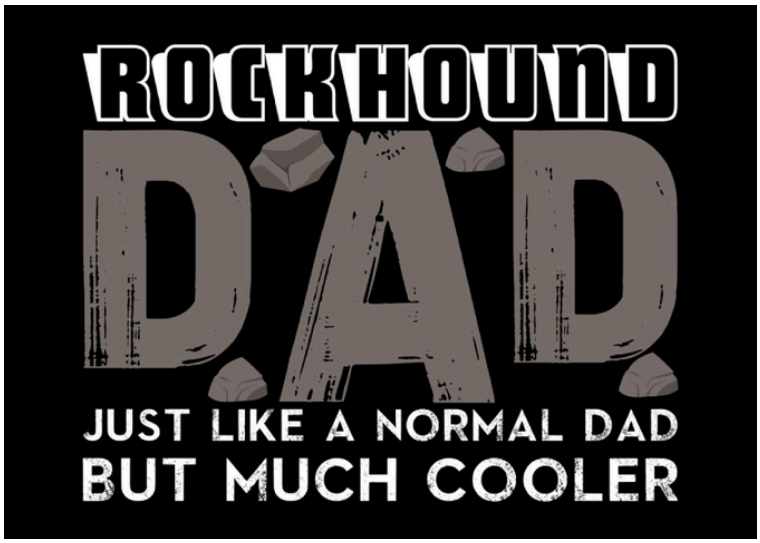
Finally, force the metal down onto the stone uniformly all the way around. While this can be done by hand, I often gently tap the punch with a hammer. Finish by twisting the bezel back and forth to burnish the top of the bezel.

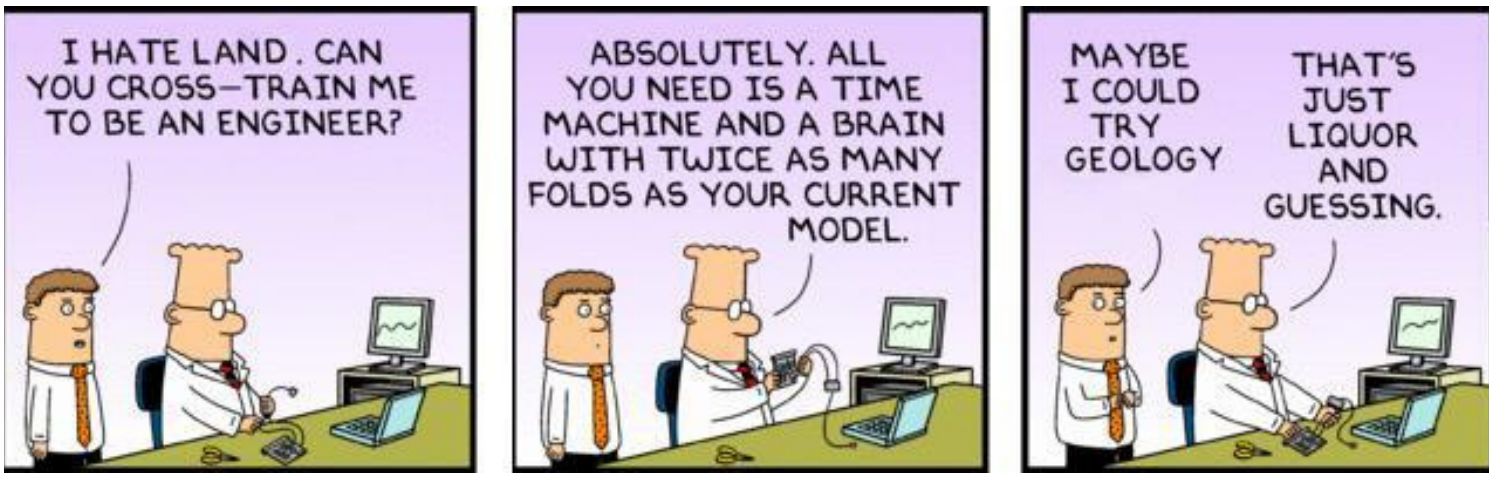


Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books

Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

Rock Talk Funny Papers





From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

For our February meeting, we had a "Get To Know Each Other" presentation. In honor of Valentine's day...we called it "I Love Rocks". We heard some great stories of how our members got involved in rockhounding, jewelry making, fossil-hunting and more. Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences.

Also, remember that we are now into the new year, and membership dues are due. You can pay at the monthly meeting, via a payment link in the last membership renewal e-mail I sent out, or via the link on the home page of our website.

For our March meeting, club vice President Chris Ward will be giving us a presentation on quartz, in all its many forms and colors. Every presentation Chris does is a great one, so be sure to be there for this one. And, may the quartz be with you!

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

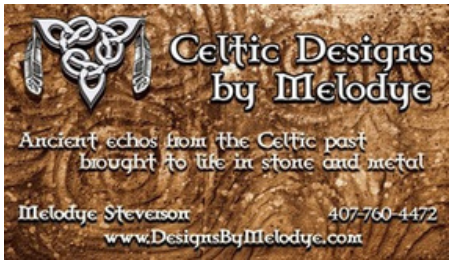
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months,illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

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Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2026

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name _____
* If both applying for membership

Child's Full Name _____
* If under 18, and applying with parent

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

☐ Returning Member?

☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634